

June, 2004



# Day Laborer Survey

## ***An Account of Day Laborers in Fairfax County***



***Department of Systems Management  
for  
Human Services***

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**Table of Contents**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS .....1**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....3**

**1. PURPOSE, IMPORTANCE, AND SCOPE .....4**

**2. BACKGROUND AND OTHER RESEARCH.....4**

**3. METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY DESIGN .....5**

**4. SURVEY FINDINGS .....5**

**5. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....17**

**6. SOURCES OF RESEARCH.....18**

**APPENDIX 1: DAY LABOR SURVEY AND SURVEY RESULTS.....21**

**APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE COMMENTS FROM DAY LABORERS.....31**



# Fairfax County Day Laborer Survey

## *An account of Day Laborers in Fairfax County*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes data gathered from the 2003 Fairfax County Day Laborer Survey. Day laborers, or *jornaleros*, include workers that gather at street corners, parking lots, strip malls, community centers, or official hiring sites seeking daily or hourly employment from numerous employers.<sup>1</sup> Results presented in this report are preliminary and will subsequently be included as part of a larger study. The purpose of this survey was to collect information about Fairfax County's day laborer population to assist county and community leaders in developing strategies to manage day laborer issues.

The survey was conducted from September 15, 2003, to October 29, 2003, at four sites in Fairfax County where day laborers gather to wait for work: Annandale (Hummer Road), Culmore, Herndon, and Springfield. Sites were identified by the Fairfax County Police Department and staff from the Department of Systems Management for Human Services (DSMHS). The survey was grouped into six sections:

#### **Demographic Information**

- Day laborers in Fairfax County are younger Hispanic men. Almost two-thirds are between 18 and 35 years of age, and the majority reside in Fairfax County with family or friends. Most live within a few miles of the site where they were interviewed.

#### **Day Laborer Site Information**

- Almost 60 percent of respondents have been coming to work at the site for less than one year. Most respondents walk to the site where they look for work. The average distance to the site from their place of residence is 2.4 miles.

#### **Types of Work Performed**

- Most day laborers work several types of jobs, including positions in construction, landscaping, painting, and janitorial work. Most respondents look for work five to seven days per week, and many have second jobs. Day laborers are hired by different types of employers; these include contractors, other day laborers, and private homeowners.

#### **Day Laborer Work**

- Most have worked as day laborers for less than three years and prefer permanent employment, but documentation, language, and transportation issues prevent this.

#### **Problems Day Laborers May Experience**

- Problems experienced by day laborers include lack of breaks, non-payment, or insufficient payment by employers.

#### **Earnings and Work Conditions of Day Laborers**

- Most respondents earn between \$7 and \$15 per hour, although this may vary by the type of job and season of the year.

## 1. PURPOSE, IMPORTANCE, AND SCOPE

The purpose of this survey was to gather data about Fairfax County's day laborer population. No one can say with any certainty how many day laborers there are in Fairfax County, but the number of persons searching for work at the four day labor sites studied has grown in the past decade. The informal sites where day laborers congregate to find work are increasingly the focus of public attention. Often these sites are sources of increased complaints to the police or other County officials for public safety issues such as increased traffic and unhealthy behavioral issues. In addition, commercial enterprises argue that groups of day laborers waiting outside of their businesses may cause customers to avoid their businesses.

Conditions under which day laborers work are also a source of concern to public officials. Day laborers are working in some of the most dangerous and otherwise hard-to-fill jobs such as construction, painting, and gardening or landscaping (Valenzuela 1999). Given the temporary nature of day labor work and the possibility that workers are not receiving adequate training or taking safety precautions, day laborers are particularly at risk. A 2002 General Accounting Office report found that day laborers are particularly vulnerable because they have few job options, so employers are more likely to take advantage of or exploit them.<sup>ii</sup> Research also shows that day laborers are vulnerable financially, and are frequently underpaid or not paid, abandoned at job sites, or otherwise mistreated.

All of these factors contributed to the need for Fairfax County to study the day laborer issue. For this study, day laborers at the Annandale (Hummer Road), Culmore, Herndon, and Springfield sites were interviewed. Given the nature of day labor work, it is not possible to draw random samples from sites. Respondents were chosen at the convenience of the interviewers. Although convenience samples are not usually as accurate as probability samples, the reliability of the data is high due to the nature of the population sampled because the majority of the respondents tend to be at the site every day and every attempt was made to include all those present. Additionally, questions in the Fairfax County Day Labor Survey were similar to those in other studies so that results could be compared between sites as well as to conclusions in other research.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND OTHER RESEARCH

An initial survey of day laborers was conducted by Fairfax County staff in 2000. This survey was followed by a learning circle in the spring of 2002.<sup>iii</sup> The learning circle was hosted by the Department of Systems Management for Human Services and included Fairfax County staff, business owners, civic leaders, day laborers, faith group leaders, nonprofit service providers, and Fairfax County Public Schools representatives.

Members of the learning circle recommended that Fairfax County staff collaborate with the community to develop county wide strategies to manage emerging day laborer issues. Subsequently, a cross-agency workgroup was chartered to collect information on issues related to day laborers in Fairfax County and to develop a set of recommendations for county officials to consider. The survey on which this report is based was commissioned in order to provide more in-depth information about the characteristics of the day laborer population specific to Fairfax County. Although this study focuses on collecting information about Fairfax County's day laborer population and their working conditions, many opportunities for further research exist.

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND SURVEY DESIGN

No officially designated day laborer sites exist in Fairfax County, and debate exists on what identifies a location as a day laborer site. Some criteria used to distinguish what constitutes a day laborer site include the number of workers that gather daily looking for work, media attention given to the site, and public complaints to the police and elected officials about the site. In this study, sites were identified by the Fairfax County Police Department and staff from the Department of Systems Management for Human Services. The identified sites for interviews to be conducted included Annandale (Hummer Road), Culmore, Herndon, and Springfield. These sites are also known to county officials as being the largest and most active day laborer gathering areas in Fairfax County.

From September 15, 2003, to October 29, 2003, a team of seven interviewers surveyed 201 day laborers at four day laborer sites in Fairfax County. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by interviewers with Spanish language expertise. Surveys were conducted on two different days of the week at each site between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Interviewers included staff from the Department of Systems Management for Human Services, Department of Community and Recreation Services, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, and a member of Reston Interfaith employed as a liaison with day laborers at the Herndon site. Prior to conducting the survey, interviewers received training focusing on potential validity and reliability issues due to variations in the Spanish language among Spanish-speaking countries and regions as well as other cultural issues.

Since the majority of day laborers are Hispanic, the survey was administered in Spanish. All but one interviewer was a native Spanish speaker. The survey was pretested by both native Spanish and English speakers, and survey questions were printed in both languages. The survey utilized basic language and included terms in both Spanish and “Spanglish” (a hybridization of Spanish and English), where appropriate, to ensure that questions were fully understood by respondents.

Questions were grouped into six sections. Because of time and budget constraints, the survey utilized mostly closed-ended multiple choice questions, although an optional response category for “other” responses was included with each question. The six survey sections included questions about sites where Fairfax County day laborers go to find work, the types of work day laborers perform, reasons for pursuing day laborer work, problems day laborers experience, earnings and work conditions, and services requested by day laborers. The survey also collected basic demographic data from respondents.

### 4. SURVEY FINDINGS

A total of 201 respondents were interviewed from four separate day laborer sites. (See Table 1.)

TABLE 1. Respondents by Site		
Site	Freq.	Percent
Culmore	50	24.9%
Herndon	62	30.8%
Hummer Road	52	25.9%
Springfield	37	18.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services.		

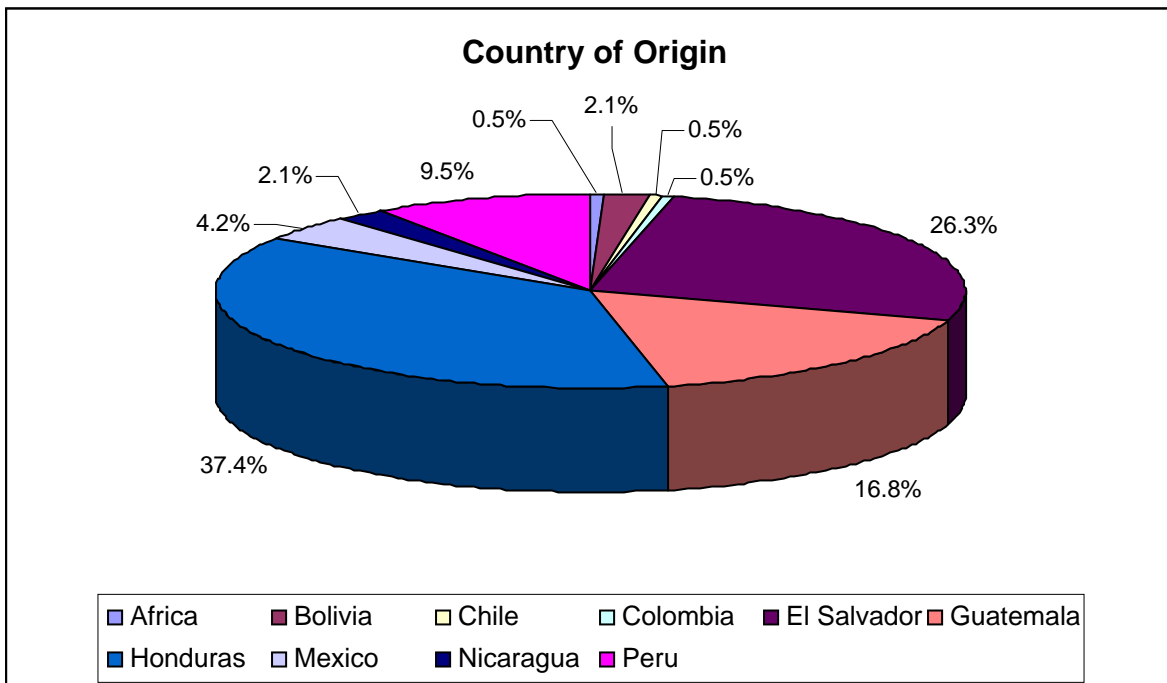
#### 4.1 Profile of the Day Laborers in Fairfax County

##### Age

- Day laborers in Fairfax County tend to be younger men. During the days that interviews were conducted, no women were present at the sites. Almost two-thirds (65.6 percent) of respondents are between 18 and 35 years of age, and the average age reported is 32.9 years. Most of remaining respondents (30.7 percent) are between 36 and 50 years of age, and less than 5 percent are over 50 years of age. There is little variation in respondent age by site.

##### Country of Origin

- All but one of the day laborers at the four sites studied in Fairfax County were Hispanic. The remaining respondent listed country of origin as “Africa.” Over 80 percent of respondents are from Central America (37.4 percent from Honduras, 26.3 percent from El Salvador, 16.8 percent from Guatemala, and 2.1 percent from Nicaragua). South American countries of origin reported include: Peru (9.5 percent), Bolivia (2.1 percent), Chile (0.5 percent), and Colombia (0.5 percent). The remaining 4.2 percent of respondents were from Mexico.



Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services

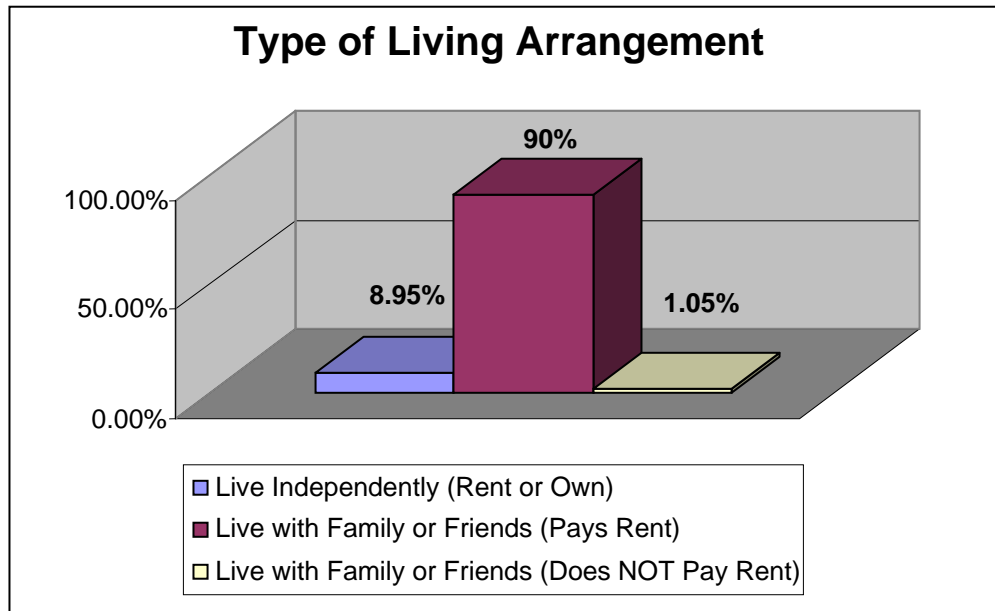
### Place of Residence

- The majority of respondents (over 90 percent of respondents who provided zip code information) reside in Fairfax County. Only 15 respondents reported living in zip codes outside of Fairfax County (one each in Catlett, Sterling, Leesburg; six in Arlington; four in Alexandria; and two in the City of Falls Church). The majority of respondents live within walking distance of the site where they were interviewed.
- The respondents were asked about their primary mode of transportation. Most respondents live within a few miles of the day laborer site where they were interviewed. Of all of the respondents, two-thirds walk to the site. The average distance to the site for those that walk is less than one mile. For those respondents that drive or use public transportation to go to the site, the average distance is 4.9 miles. On average, respondents reside 2.4 miles from the day laborer site where they work. (See Table 2.)

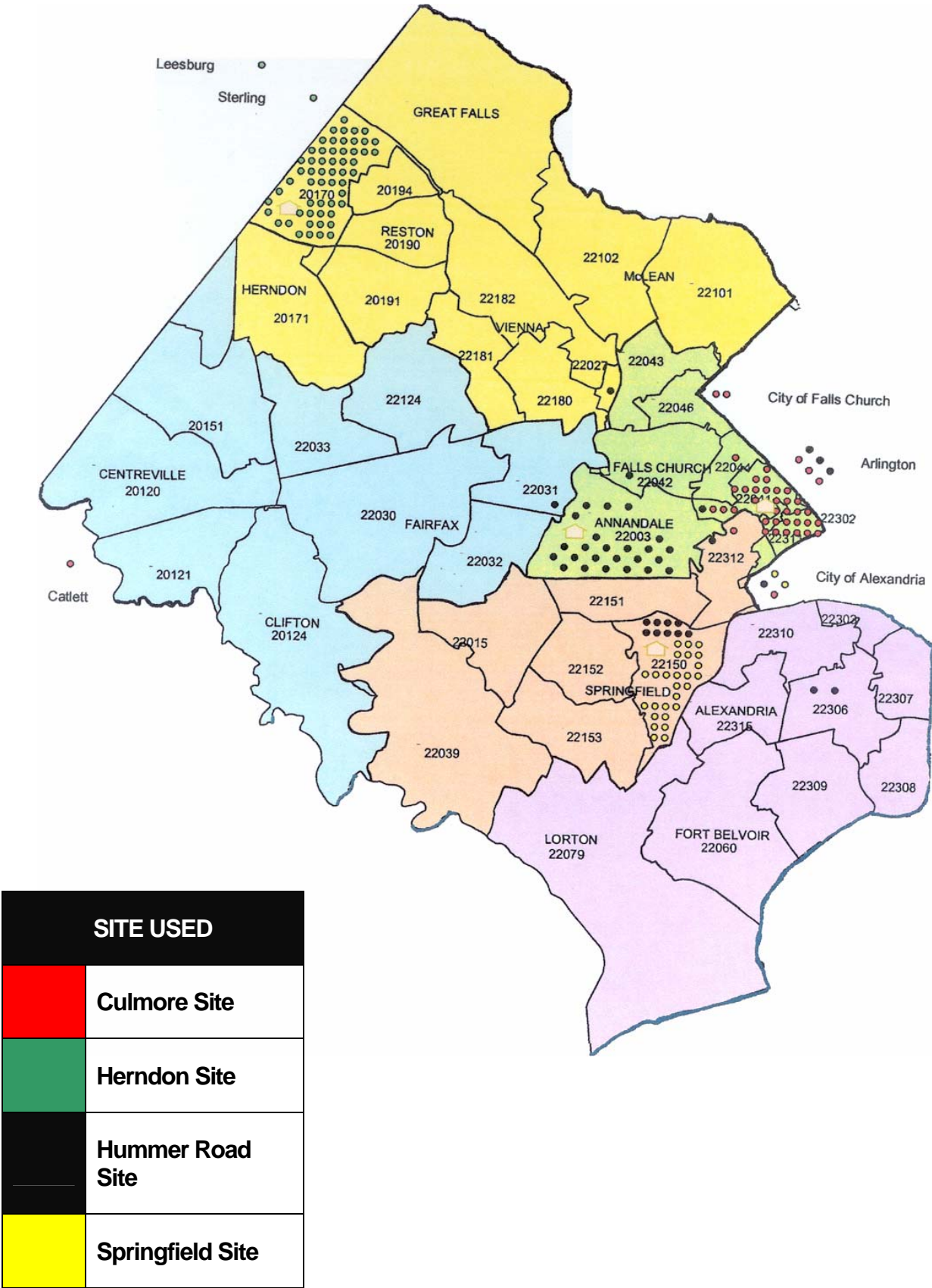
<b>TABLE 2.</b> <b>Average Distance from Site</b> <b>By Mode of Transportation, by Site</b>			
Site	Average Distance (miles)		
	Walk	Car, Bus, or Metro	All Respondents
Culmore	0.70	4.98	1.73
Herndon	0.95	5.18	1.68
Hummer Road	0.64	7.50	4.54
Springfield	0.85	2.21	1.15
Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services.			



- When asked about their living arrangements, the majority of respondents (90.0 percent) reported they rented a room with family or friends; 8.9 percent reported living on their own (rent or own); and the remaining 1.1 percent of respondents reported that they lived with family or friends without paying rent. No other living arrangements were reported by respondents.



# DAY LABORERS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE BY SITE USED

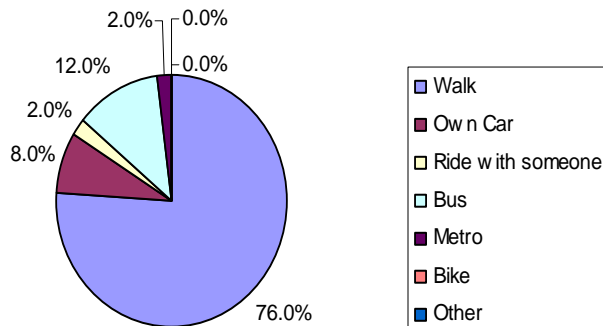


## 4.2 Transportation to the Site

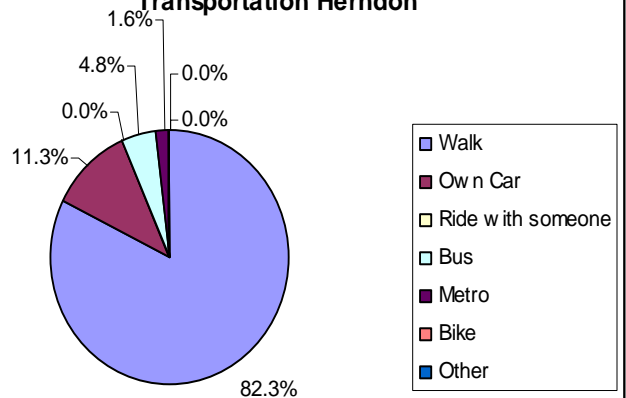
Most respondents (68.8 percent) reported that they walk to day laborer sites. Over 90 percent of respondents are county residents. Three quarters or more of respondents at the Culmore (76.0 percent), Herndon (82.3 percent), and Springfield (74.3 percent) sites reported that they walk to the site, compared with only 42.3 percent of respondents from the Hummer Road site. On average, respondents at the Hummer Road site reported walking a little over half a mile (0.6 miles) to get to the site, slightly less than workers at the Culmore site (0.7 miles). Respondents at the Springfield and Herndon sites walked longer distances (0.8 miles and 0.9 miles, respectively).

The Hummer Road site differs from the other three sites because a much larger proportion of workers use the bus as transportation to get to the site. Only 20 percent of total respondents reported taking a bus to the day laborer site where they were interviewed; however, of those who reported using the bus to go to the site, two-thirds were interviewed at the Hummer Road location. Only two of the day laborers at the Hummer Road site indicated that they travel in their own car; another two indicated that they ride to the site with someone else.

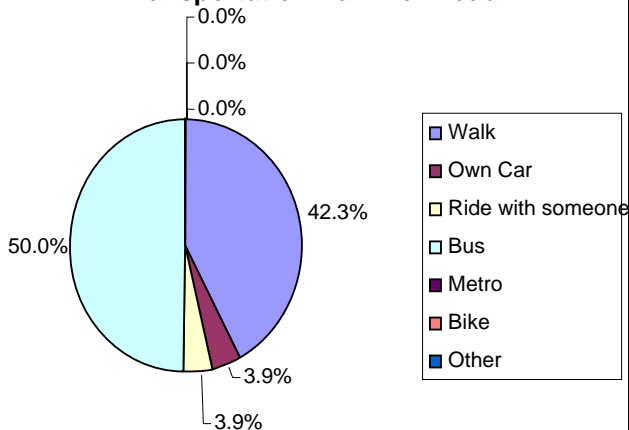
Transportation Culmore



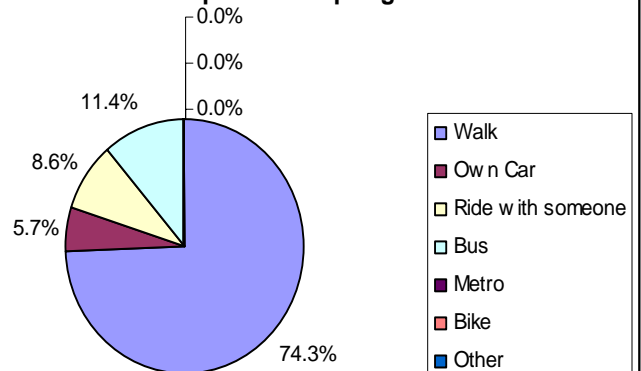
Transportation Herndon



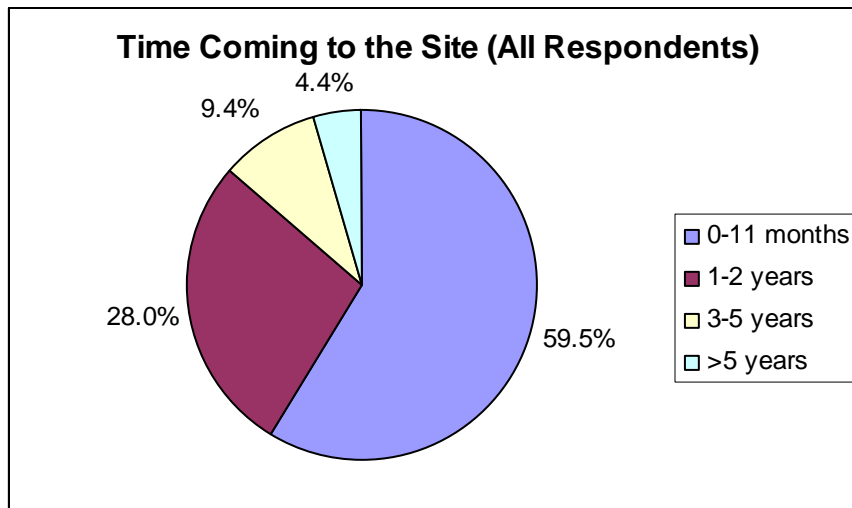
Transportation Hummer Road



Transportation Springfield



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## Culmore

- Respondents from the Culmore site were more likely to have reported using the site for a longer period of time. Six of the nine workers among all respondents who had been coming to a day laborer site for more than five years went to the Culmore site. Respondents at the Culmore site also had the smallest proportion reporting that they had used the site for less than one year (34.0 percent or 17 workers).

## Herndon

- The Herndon location had the largest proportion of day laborers who had used the site for less than a year: three-quarters of respondents (75.8 percent). Only 14.5 percent reported using the site one to two years, and 9.7 percent more than three years.

## Hummer Road and Springfield

- Respondents at the Hummer Road and Springfield sites reported similar data for length of time coming to the site. At Hummer Road, 55.7 percent of the day laborers have used the site for less than a year, 34.6 percent have used the site one to two years, and 9.6 percent have used the site for three or more years. In Springfield, 59.4 percent of the day laborers reported using the site for less than a year, 32.4 percent have used the site one to two years, and 8.1 percent have used the site for three or more years.

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#### 4.4 Employment Characteristics

##### Days per Week Seeking Employment

Respondents spend several days per week seeking work at day laborer sites. Almost three quarters of all of respondents (74.4 percent) come to the sites looking for employment 5 to 7 days per week. (See Table 3.) Among those that come to the site 5 to 7 days per week, one-seventh report working a second job. Another 17.1 percent spend between 3 to 4 days per week looking for work at the sites, while only 8.5 percent come to the site 1 to 2 days per week. Of the 15 respondents that reported coming to the site 1 to 2 days per week, three quarters hold another job. Because Culmore was the only site where some of the interviews were conducted on a Saturday, this may explain the higher percent of respondents coming to that site only 1 to 2 days per week. (See Table 3)

TABLE 3. Days per Week of Seeking Employment, by Site					
Days Seeking Work	Culmore	Herndon	Hummer Road	Springfield	All Respondents
1 to 2 days	16.0%	4.8%	7.8%	5.6%	8.5%
3 to 4 days	18.0%	17.7%	17.7%	13.9%	17.1%
5 to 7 days	66.0%	77.4%	74.5%	80.6%	74.4%
Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services.					

##### Daily Hours of Work Obtained

Over two-thirds of all respondents (67.8 percent) reported that they obtained 5 to 8 hours of work per day; another 27. 6 percent of all of respondents reported obtaining 9 to 13 hours of work per day. (See Table 4.) Day labor work is not the only employment respondents report having; 23.7 percent of all respondents stated that they worked at another non-day labor job.

TABLE 4 Daily Hours of Work Obtained, by Site					
Hours of Work	Culmore	Herndon	Hummer Road	Springfield	All Respondents
Less than 5 Hours	4.0%	1.6%	3.9%	2.9%	3.0%
5 to 8 Hours	78.0%	67.7%	69.2%	51.4%	67.8%
9 to 13 Hours	18.0%	30.7%	25.0%	40.0%	27.6%
More than 13 Hours	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	5.7%	1.5%
Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services.					

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### Typical Hourly Salary

The majority of respondents indicated that wages varied depending on the type of work performed and the season of the year. Most day laborers report earnings above the minimum wage. Only 6.1 percent of respondents reported making less than \$6.99 per hour, while almost two-thirds reported earnings of \$7 to \$9.99 per hour, and 27.8 percent reported making \$10 to \$14.99 per hour. (See Table 5.)

<b>TABLE 5.</b> <b>Typical Hourly Salary during the Previous Year, by Site</b>					
<b>Hourly Wage</b>	<b>Culmore</b>	<b>Herndon</b>	<b>Hummer Road</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>All Respondents</b>
<b>Less than \$5.00</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%	1.1%
<b>\$5.00 to \$6.99</b>	4.6%	1.8%	6.3%	9.1%	5.0%
<b>\$7.00 to \$9.99</b>	56.8%	72.7%	62.5%	66.7%	65.0%
<b>\$10.00 to \$14.99</b>	36.4%	25.5%	29.2%	18.2%	27.8%
<b>\$15.00 to \$19.99</b>	2.3%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	1.1%
Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services.					

There are no statistically significant relationships between average hourly earnings and how long the respondents have lived in the U.S., the length of time they have been coming to the site, or the number of days that they look for work.

### Type of Work Performed

Most respondents perform several different types of work. Fifty-nine percent report having done four or more types of tasks at work. Only 12.1 percent reported performing a single job. Day labor work may be a stepping stone to gaining experience and skills. Some respondents indicated during the interview that they were willing to perform almost any job offered to them, which may indicate that work is frequently difficult to obtain for those in the day labor market. (See Table 6.)

### Type of Employers

Day laborers were asked about their employers. The majority of day laborers interviewed indicated that they had more than one type of employer. Ninety percent said yes to working for contractors, 61 percent said yes to working with home owners, 21 percent said yes to working for other day laborers, and less than 1 percent said yes to working for other types of employers.

TABLE 6. Types of Jobs Reported most Frequently		
Type of Job	Freq.	Percent
Construction	165	83.3%
Landscaping	138	69.7%
Painting	120	60.6%
Janitor/Cleaning Service	115	58.1%
Carpentry	100	50.5%
Plumbing	47	23.7%
Electrical	28	14.1%
Other jobs	33	16.7%
Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services.		

#### 4.5 Permanent Employment and Barriers to Obtaining Permanent Employment

The majority of respondents (85.8 percent) reported they would prefer to have permanent employment rather than day labor work; 12.1 percent of respondents reported already having some form of permanent employment. Only 2.1 percent of respondents reported that they did want permanent employment.

Those respondents who reported a preference for permanent employment were asked about barriers they may have encountered while trying to find full-time work. As shown in table 7, the most frequently reported barriers included lack of documents (84.7 percent), lack of English proficiency (88.3 percent), lack of transportation (79.1 percent), and lack of available permanent employment (61.4 percent).

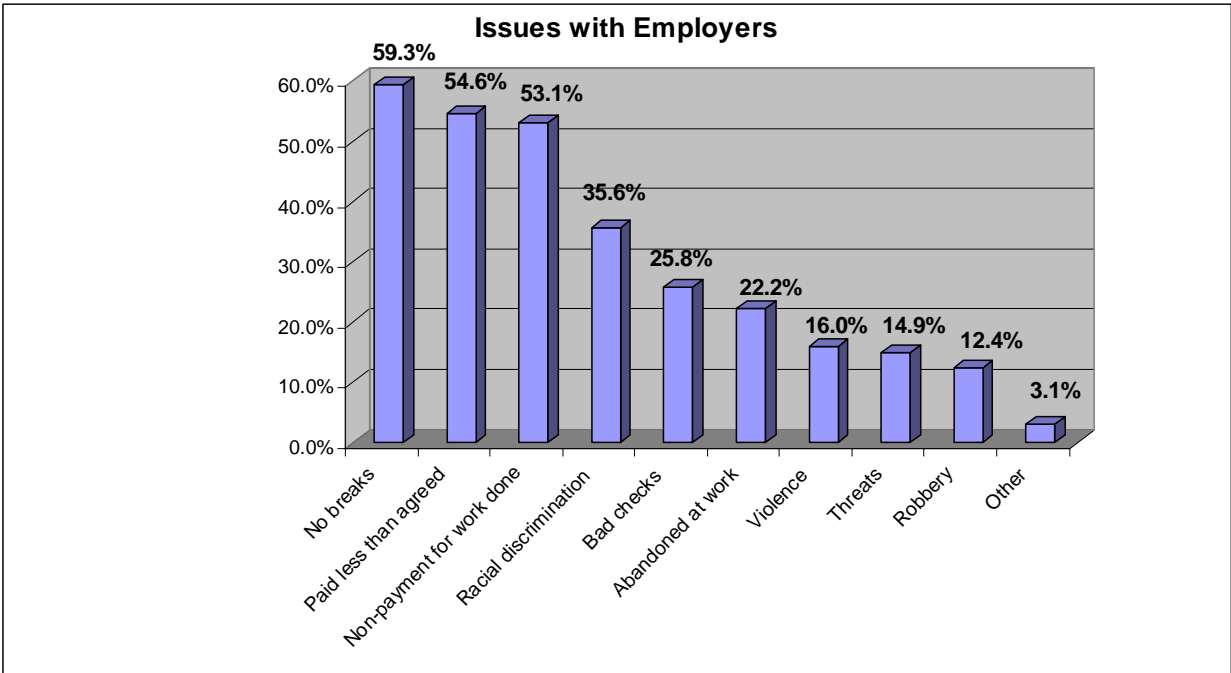
TABLE 7. Barriers to Permanent Employment		
	Freq.	Percent
Lack of documents	143	85.1%
Lack of English proficiency	149	88.7%
Pay rate is too low	91	54.2%
No available permanent work	103	61.3%
No specific job skills	69	41.1%
Racial discrimination	60	35.7%
Problems with employer	41	24.4%
No transportation	134	79.8%
I don't know how to find permanent employment	78	46.4%
Other reasons/Don't know	6	3.6%
Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services.		



## 4.6 Problems with Employers

Respondents were asked to provide information about problems encountered with employers. The majority of the respondents (84.0 percent) listed having one or more problems with their employers. The problems reported most frequently included not receiving any time for breaks (59.3 percent), payment less than that which was agreed upon (54.6 percent), and non-payment for work performed (53.1 percent). No respondents reported experiencing all of the problems listed. No correlation was found among the length of time living in the United States and having issues with employers. (See Table 8.)

TABLE 8. Problems with Employers		
Problem	Frequency	Percent
No breaks	115	59.3%
Paid less than agreed	106	54.6%
Non-payment for work done	103	53.1%
Racial discrimination	69	35.6%
Bad checks	50	25.8%
Abandoned at work	43	22.2%
Violence	31	16.0%
Threats	29	14.9%
Robbery	24	12.4%
Other	6	3.1%
Source: Department of Systems Management for Human Services.		



## 5. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Day Laborer Survey provides a wealth of information about the characteristics of day laborers in Fairfax County. The findings of this study provide policy makers with valuable insights and facts about the day laborer population in Fairfax County. As a next step, the information obtained by this study should be combined with information from other sources to investigate how day laborer sites form and to determine whether the formation of new sites can be predicted. The ability to anticipate where future day laborer sites may form would provide policy makers with a valuable tool to use for policy and decision making.

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<sup>i</sup> Valenzuela, Abel Jr. and Edwin Meléndez. April 11, 2003. *Day Labor in New York: Findings from the NYDL Survey*. University of California, Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Urban Poverty, Institute for Social Science Research.

<sup>ii</sup> GAO Report: Labor's Efforts to Enforce Protections for Day Laborers Could Benefit From Better Data and Guidance. United States General Accounting Office, Report to the Hon. Luis V. Gutierrez, U.S. House of Representatives. (September 2002).

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- iii The Learning Circle is a process by which a group of community stakeholders convene to address an issue that affects them, using systematic information collection and analysis, facilitated discussions, and strategic thinking. A Learning Circle is particularly useful and effective when diverse perspectives and information derived from research, practice, and experience need to be considered to inform the participants so that they are armed with good information when thinking about community strategies. The Learning Circle process was deemed appropriate for increasing understanding about day labor issues in Fairfax County because:
    - The issues around day labor are complex. Most people have some but not all the information.
    - A strategy was needed to learn about the issues and the solutions that other communities around the country have developed.
    - It is essential to build understanding between day laborers and other members of the community.
    - The attention and support of various community stakeholder groups, not just the County government, is required to address community issues.



Department of Systems  
Management for Human Services

# Appendix 1



*Day Labor Survey and Survey Results*



**To be completed by person conducting survey.**

**Name of person conducting survey:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day laborer site where survey was administered:**

☐ Culmore ☐ Hummer Road (Annandale)  
☐ Herndon (Alabama Drive & Elden St) ☐ Springfield

**Time of day survey was administered:** \_\_\_\_\_ **a.m.**

*Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am employed by Fairfax County/ am a Fairfax County employee.*

**FILTER QUESTION TO EXCLUDE PREVIOUS RESPONDENTS**

*In the previous 30 days, has anyone conducted a survey with you about your experiences as a day laborer?*

*If **YES**: thank respondent and proceed with next respondent.*

*If **NO**: proceed with survey.*

**Fairfax County is currently conducting** a survey on the experiences of day laborers in this County. The answers to these questions will be part of a larger report and will help Fairfax County to better know the needs of its residents. The answers you give us will be kept confidential, and we will not ask you for your name. The survey should take approximately \_15-20\_ minutes to complete. Would you please help us by answering some questions?

Thank you.



## Part I. Day Laborer Site Information

First, we would like to ask you a few questions about the places where you go to find work as day laborer.

### 1. How long have you been coming to this place to look for work as a day laborer?

	Freq.	Percent (n=201)
Less than 6 months	88	43.8%
6 – 11 months	27	13.4%
1 – 2 years	58	28.9%
3 – 5 years	19	9.5%
More than 5 years	9	4.5%

### 2. During the past year, have you ever gone to other locations to look for work as a day laborer? (Choose all that apply.)

	Freq.	Percent (n=59)
Culmore	13	22.0%
Herndon (Alabama Drive & Elden St)	0	0.0%
Hummer Road (Annandale)	13	22.0%
Springfield	9	15.3%
Other Site:	32	54.2%

### 3. How many days each week do you usually come to **this place** looking for work as a day laborer?

	Freq.	Percent (n=199)
1 – 2 days	17	8.5%
3 – 4 days	34	17.1%
5 – 7 days	148	74.4%

### 4. On average, how many hours of work do you obtain daily when you come here to look for work?

	Freq.	Percent (n=199)
Less than 5 hours	6	3.0%
5 – 8 hours	135	67.8%
9 – 13 hours	55	27.6%
More than 13 hours	3	1.5%

### 5. What means of transportation do you **most** use to come here to look for work?

	Freq.	Percent (n=199)
Walk	137	68.8%
Own car	15	7.5%
Ride with someone else	6	3.0%
Bus	39	19.6%
Metro	2	1.0%
Bike	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%

### 6. How far (**in miles**) do you live from this site?

	Site	Average Distance (n=191)
Distance in Miles	Culmore	1.7 miles
	Herndon	1.7 miles
	Hummer Road	4.5 miles
	Springfield	1.1 miles
	All Respondents	2.4 miles

**Part II. Types of Work****7. What jobs do you specialize in as a day laborer? Indicate ALL that apply.**

	Freq.	Percent (n=198)
<i>Construction</i>	165	83.3%
<i>Painting</i>	120	60.6%
<i>Landscaping</i>	138	69.7%
<i>Plumbing</i>	47	23.7%
<i>Carpentry</i>	100	50.5%
<i>Mechanic</i>	14	7.1%
<i>Janitor/Cleaning Service</i>	115	58.1%
<i>Electricity</i>	28	14.1%
<i>Other jobs (please, specify)</i>	19	9.6%

**8. In a typical week, what types of employers hire you the most? Mark all that apply.**

	Freq.	Percent (n=196)
<i>Contractor or company</i>	176	89.8%
<i>Individual homeowner</i>	122	62.2%
<i>Other day laborer</i>	43	21.9%
<i>Others</i>	1	0.5%

### Part III. Reasons for Working as a Day Laborer

The purpose of the following questions is to find out how long you have been working as a day laborer and if you would like to obtain permanent employment in other sectors although you might be performing the same tasks you are currently performing.

9. How long have you been working as a day laborer?				
	Freq.	Percent (n=195)		
Less than one year	89	45.6%		
1 – 3 years	71	36.4%		
4 – 10 years	26	13.3%		
More than 10 years	9	4.6%		
		Yes	No	I already have a permanent job
10. Would you prefer a permanent job with only <b>one</b> company instead of day laborer work? (n=190)	Freq.	163	4	23
	Percent	85.8%	2.1%	12.1%
If <b>YES</b> , what stops you from getting permanent employment? Mark all that apply.				
	Freq.	Percent (n=163)		
Lack of documents	138	84.7%		
Lack of English proficiency	144	88.3%		
Pay rate is too low	90	55.2%		
No available permanent work	100	61.4%		
No specific job skills	68	41.7%		
Racial discrimination	58	35.6%		
Problems with employer	40	24.5%		
No transportation	129	79.1%		
I don't know how to find permanent employment	76	46.6%		
Other reasons	4	2.5%		
Don't know	2	1.2%		

## Part IV. Problems Day Laborers May Experience

We would like to ask you a few questions about possible problems you personally might have experienced. Indicate all that apply.

11. In the past year, have you ever experienced any of the following problems from people who hired you to work? Mark all that apply.

(n=194)

	Never		Sometimes		Frequently	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
<i>Non-payment for work done</i>	89	45.9%	79	40.7%	24	12.4%
<i>Paid less than agreed</i>	87	44.8%	75	38.7%	31	16.0%
<i>Bad checks</i>	142	73.2%	41	21.1%	9	4.6%
<i>Abandoned at work</i>	147	75.8%	37	19.1%	6	3.1%
<i>No breaks</i>	75	38.7%	71	36.6%	44	22.7%
<i>Violence</i>	157	80.9%	26	13.4%	5	2.6%
<i>Robbery</i>	163	84.0%	23	11.9%	1	0.5%
<i>Threats</i>	161	83.0%	21	10.8%	8	4.1%
<i>Racial discrimination</i>	118	60.8%	57	29.4%	12	6.2%
<i>Other</i>	63	32.5%	2	1.0%	4	2.1%

12. In the past year, have you ever experienced more problems with any of the following things? Mark all that apply.

	Freq.	Percent
<i>Getting or renewing a driver's license</i>	121	76.6%
<i>Fear of authorities</i>	77	48.7%
<i>Opening bank account</i>	75	47.5%
<i>Obtaining housing</i>	59	37.3%
<i>Housing discrimination</i>	33	20.9%

Part V. Earnings and Work Conditions of Day Laborers				
We would like to obtain information regarding your earnings and labor conditions.				
13. During the past year, what was your average hourly salary?				
	Freq.		Percent	(n=180)
Less than \$5.00	2		1.1%	
\$5.00 - \$6.99	9		5.0%	
\$7.00 - \$9.99	117		65.0%	
\$10.00 - \$14.99	50		27.8%	
\$15.00 - \$19.99	2		1.1%	
\$20.00 or More	0		0.0%	
14. What is the minimum <b>hourly</b> wage in dollars that you are <b>currently</b> willing to accept for day laborer work?				
Minimum Hourly Wage Willing to Accept	Culmore		\$9.96	
	Herndon		\$9.88	
	Hummer Road		\$9.20	
	Springfield		\$9.27	
	All Respondents		\$9.61	
15. During the past year, how frequently were you able to negotiate your earnings?				
	Freq.		Percent	(n=191)
Never	50		26.2%	
Occasionally	75		39.3%	
Always	66		34.6%	
16. Do you hold another job besides day labor work right now? (n=190)	Yes		No	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
	45	23.7%	145	76.3%
If <b>YES</b> : Weekly hours at other job?				
	Freq.		Percent	(n=45)
Less than 10 hours	3		6.7%	
10-19 hours	3		6.7%	
20-34 hours	7		15.6%	
35 or more hours	32		71.1%	

**Part VI. Demographics**

The purpose of the following questions is to obtain information regarding the day labor market and living arrangements in order to improve our knowledge. We would like to remind you that no personally identifiable information will be collected at any point.

**17. How long have you lived in the United States?**

	Freq.	Percent (n=191)
<i>Less than 6 months</i>	24	12.6%
<i>7 - 11 months</i>	27	14.1%
<i>1 - 2 years</i>	60	31.4%
<i>3 - 5 years</i>	48	25.1%
<i>More than 5 years</i>	32	16.8%

**18. Would you like help obtaining any of the following things? Mark all that apply.**

	Freq.	Percent		Freq.	(n=190) Percent
<i>Finding a job</i>	181	95.3%	<i>Childcare</i>	28	14.7%
<i>Housing</i>	145	76.3%	<i>English classes</i>	181	95.3%
<i>Transportation</i>	162	85.3%	<i>Legal assistance</i>	170	89.5%
<i>Medical/Dental Attention</i>	176	92.6%	<i>Substance abuse treatment</i>	28	14.7%
<i>Food/Clothing</i>	124	65.3%	<i>Help obtaining a driver's license</i>	159	83.7%
<i>High school or formal education</i>	158	83.2%	<i>TANF/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families</i>	57	30.0%
<i>Food stamps</i>	78	41.1%	<i>Other</i>	4	2.1%

**19. Where will you sleep tonight?**

	Freq.	Percent		Freq.	(n=190) Percent
<i>My own house/apartment/trailer</i>	17	8.9%	<i>Other housing program</i>	0	0.0%
<i>Family/friends- I pay rent</i>	171	90.0%	<i>Outdoors/abandoned building/car</i>	0	0.0%
<i>Family/friends- I do NOT pay rent</i>	2	1.1%	<i>Other place:</i>	0	0.0%
<i>Motel</i>	0	0.0%			
<i>Shelter</i>	0	0.0%			

Day Laborer Survey

<b>Country</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Africa	1	0.5%
Bolivia	4	2.1%
Chile	1	0.5%
Colombia	1	0.5%
El Salvador	50	26.3%
Guatemala	32	16.8%
Honduras	71	37.4%
Mexico	8	4.2%
Nicaragua	4	2.1%
Peru	18	9.5%

<b>Zip code</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
20119	Catlett	1	0.6%
20164	Sterling	1	0.6%
20170	Herndon	56	32.7%
20176	Leesburg	1	0.6%
22003	Annandale	24	14.0%
22031	Fairfax	1	0.6%
22040	Falls Church	2	1.2%
22041	Falls Church	32	18.7%
22042	Falls Church	2	1.2%
22044	Falls Church	1	0.6%
22150	Springfield	35	20.5%
22185	Vienna	1	0.6%
22203	Arlington	1	0.6%
22204	Arlington	3	1.8%
22205	Arlington	1	0.6%
22213	Arlington	1	0.6%
22304	Alexandria	4	2.3%
22306	Alexandria	2	1.2%
22312	Alexandria	2	1.2%

Department of Systems  
Management for Human Services

## Appendix 2



*Sample Comments from Day Laborers*





# Fairfax County Day Laborer Survey

## *An account of Day Laborers in Fairfax County*

**Question: Would you like to give us any other relevant information?  
Any other comments or suggestions?**

*NOTE: These comments were made by the day laborers and recorded by the interviewers at the time of the interview.*

### *Sample Comments:*

#### **Assistance**

- Help obtaining a place to stay and wait for work. We are here to work. The police doesn't let us stand here anymore, they scare away the contractors. Contractors received tickets just to be stopped on the street
- We want to obtain residence.
- I would like to have legal assistance for my green card.
- I need help to find medical assistance and help with green card
- If health dept could come to Alabama Drive to vaccinate the day laborers.
- Getting driver's license is very important for me. I need to get transportation to get my own food, find a better job, etc.
- I don't have any identification. I would like to be able to have a bank account, pay taxes and drive.
- I don't try to obtain a license. I know is almost impossible for people like me. I work hard to support my family in Peru, the police makes very difficult our work. The economy of the US would go down without people like me.
- I don't have a driver's license or a bank account. I am afraid of trying. I am only here for 3 years, after that I'll go back to Guatemala. I am afraid here, the police does not make easy to get work. There is always problems.

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- I would like a place where we could go and peacefully stay, a planned site, like in MD.
- He would like to see more involvement from day laborers in organizing themselves so they can bring to the forefront the issues that affects them.

## Employment

- The Contractors who hire us don't treat us right and don't pay us what we are promised.
- Permanent employment does not pay enough. I went to law school in Peru, I speak English well but I cannot make a living here. You dream all your life of coming to the US, you get here, and you realized that it does not matter where you are when you are poor. Poor people is treated bad anyway. It is very irresponsible of the government to force people to drive without a license. Can you tell the police to let us work in peace.
- A contractor run over me with his car. I was not hurt much, but destroyed my bike and I don't have any transportation now. I was afraid of reporting it. I am afraid of applying for a license again. I don't have a bank account.
- Lives with friends. Family lives in Pennsylvania. Contractor hired him & 4 others to go work to Tennessee for 4-5 months. 75% payment due at the end of the work. Contractor left workers in Tennessee without pay. Now the contractor says he will only pay remainder if they show him a green card. He had to send his family to Pennsylvania to live w/relatives because he is unable to support them. Laborer states contractor was aware before hiring them that they did not have a green card.
- There are people that come and do not pay what they have offered.
- A lot of contractors don't pay. Business owners don't want to see us around this area.
- I need to find a better job. I am sick and I would prefer to work full time and get medical insurance. I need also legal assistance to get paid by contractor who made me work 81 hrs.
- There is more work here than in Springfield. I come w/ some friends. I have a room to myself. I worked for a guy, he never paid me. I did not want problems, so I let go. I did not want the police involved. I don't get work always, just half the time. In the winter is difficult to get work. I also work for a lady, is not permanent, she calls me when she has work.
- I didn't get paid for my work. I have called contractors and they always say I will pay you later but I have not being paid so far. I wish I could get legal assistance.
- I would prefer to find a job that is permanent.

- Sometimes contractors come and do not pay us for the work we do.
- Yesterday a contractor left him in Maryland.
- Contractors take advantage of us. I did not get paid for 60 hrs of work and there is nothing I could do about it.
- Worked and 5 others for a week w/out pay and the employer reported payment to the IRS so now he owes them money and does not know what to do. Has papers but feels he has no rights.

## General Comments

- Every day it gets more difficult. Every day a new door closes. When we are in our countries we want to come here, but once here it is so hard that you think about going back. Rent does not forgive you. It doesn't matter whether you are or not documented now a days. They kick you out just the same, without a warning (the employers). There is not much work. The employers know that and take advantage. We are not even covered by the company's insurance when we have work accidents and get injured. A colleague fell down a scaffold and was injured. He had to pay \$400 out of pocket to the doctor. The employer look away the paperwork the doctor gave him so he could not go to a lawyer and seek compensation.
- Lack of work makes me worry about the children I have in my country (Honduras)
- This survey is good. It is very nice here the economy is good. The only thing is that I am far away from my family and I will have to return to be with them.
- I am grateful for the work the county is doing.
- Share the room w/2 others. I need to work, with work I am happy even if it does not pay well
- I would like for whoever reads this to take into account that we are suffering out here and that we need a site to organize our efforts. Thanks to all the participants doing the survey.

## Police

- Police and authorities need to understand that we come here to work. I'm glad that I am able to come here to look for work.
- The police does not let us stay and work. From 9 on, we have to leave. When contractors come after 9 the police gives them tickets. We want to work and they make it difficult.

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- We would like the police to leave us alone.
- Police is very rude. People come here to work, we're not criminals

## Transportation

- Had a permanent job, lost it because of transportation.
- Impossible to obtain a license, that limits the work options. Permanent jobs do not pay enough. I share a room w/ 3 other people. Rent is too high. Cannot open bank account.
- I would like to obtain a driver's license so I can buy a car and expand my work possibilities. Most people that comes here are skilled workers w/ a license is easier to obtain work. If I had a license I would not come here for work
- Cannot renew my license. I rent a chair in an apartment. The police come here all the time. They push the contractors away. If we could legally work, we would not be here. When you don't have papers, they take advantage pay you less and no benefits. Need 2 jobs to survive. Winter is really hard. I have to support my family.
- I had a permanent job in G. Mason University but I had to quit due to personal problems. I don't like to come here, but I cannot find permanent work. I have papers but transportation is an issue. I prefer any kind of work permanent, even if it pays less.
- I never applied for a license, is too difficult. I don't want to try. I am tired of problems.
- Need help to get drivers license. Transportation is very important.